

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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June 12, 2012

The Honorable Tommy Williams
Texas Senate
PO Box 12068 – Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator Williams:

This letter is in response to your requests at the Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee Hearing on April 12, 2012. You directed the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to identify the resources necessary to immediately increase our driver license issuance capacity by remaining open on Saturdays and increasing office hours two nights a week; assess the benefits of allowing the private sector to conduct driving tests; and identify other resources essential to providing adequate driver license services to the public now and in the future. As I stated at the hearing, the single most visible sign of dysfunction in state government is the long lines wrapped around our driver license offices throughout the state.

The significant increase in the state's population over the last 12 years has resulted in an increase of the number of transactions without a corresponding increase in capacity. At the same time, federal mandates related to the Real ID Act have increased the complexity, time and cost of every driver license transaction. Additionally, over the last decade, the Department failed to effectively employ technology to address the increasing demand for these essential services.

The Driver License System (DLS), implemented in April 2009, exceeded cost projections, suffered substantial delays, and when finally delivered, it came with multiple defects that slow processing time and hinder administrative enforcement actions. Furthermore, the Department has yet to leverage successful business technologies, such as self-service kiosks and web-based scheduling of appointments, which would allow DPS to increase capacity by balancing the demand for services, optimizing personnel resources and increasing customer convenience.

The driver license resources provided during the 82nd Legislative Session has enabled the Department to make the following improvements:

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- Installed queuing systems and implemented online scheduling for road tests in the 59 busiest driver license (DL) offices
- Piloted online scheduling for commercial driving tests in two DL offices (will be expanded to 45 offices by September 2012)
- Installed automated testing systems in all offices
- Now able to accept credit card transactions in all offices and for online transactions
- Increased calls answered by DPS call centers by 40 percent
- Shortened card delivery time from 45 days to less than 10 days
- Recruited and trained summer interns to process renewal and replacement driver licenses for the annual increased demand during the summer months
- Upgraded 38 existing facilities ill-suited for the public use
- Hired more than 200 new DL examiners to staff DL mega centers and began training them this month
- Four DL mega centers are scheduled to open by the end of September 2012
- Two DL mega centers are scheduled to open by the end of January 2013

These enhancements have been crucial and will increase our ability to improve driver license issuance and processes statewide; however, as you noted during the hearing, more work is needed to adequately address the existing demand. And if an additional three million people move to Texas by 2015 as projected, the Department will need to be prepared for the additional demand.

We have completed the analysis for which we were tasked, and our attached response includes increases in personnel to extend hours and fully staff all counters across the state; costs to correct defects in DLS, ensure DLS availability and acquire proven technologies to decrease transaction time; and add two new offices in downtown Houston and Dallas. The total cost for the additional enhancements over two years is more than \$152 million, which is itemized in the attached proposal.

The personnel and other resources are essential, yet it is also important to emphasize the need to correct DLS deficiencies as soon as possible. Delays in DLS functions consequently delay transactions across the state, and a DLS shutdown ceases all DL transactions and prevents law enforcement officers' access to the system. The DLS priority enhancements are to: eliminate system delays and shutdowns; eliminate the need for examiners to repeat entry of certain data fields such as social security numbers; eliminate the need for examiners to cancel entire transactions and start over simply to correct errors; and correct system gaps to enable the automatic entry of suspension actions, such as cancelled insurance, violation of probation and truancy. Additional details concerning DLS enhancement requirements and background information on the administrative revocation issues are attached.

Lastly, we have concluded that allowing the private sector to perform Class C driving examinations would significantly improve efficiency by eliminating the most time-consuming DL transactions.

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Prior to the 81st Legislative Session, the director of DPS had the authority to allow driver education schools to perform the driving test. Since then, and understandably, the Texas Legislature was concerned about the number of young drivers who lost their lives in fatal crashes.

As a result, the 81st Legislature enacted legislation that requires the Department to conduct all driving tests at DL offices. At that time, the Department did not request adequate personnel to accommodate the additional workload.

To address previously identified concerns, the Department would need to establish a robust audit program to properly regulate the private sector testing. Additionally, the approximately 80 personnel currently performing driving test functions at the 59 busiest DL offices on a full and part-time basis could then be reassigned to issue driver licenses and state identification cards. This action would also help reduce congestion at offices with limited parking.

I look forward to working with you and the other members of the Texas Legislature in addressing these important issues and to continue enhancing our state's driver license system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven C. McCraw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "McCraw" clearly legible.

Steve C. McCraw

Director

Enclosures